

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND

**Development and characterisation of an ultra-long
exposure UV dosimeter**

A dissertation submitted by

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Abstract

Excessive exposure to solar ultraviolet (UV) radiation is known to have detrimental effects on human health, some of which are cumulative in nature with impacts that may arise after years and decades of exposure. Therefore, it is important that the risk associated with prolonged UV exposure can be investigated; this requires long-term studies in which large-dose measurements can be accurately quantified.

Chemically-based UV dosimeters have been widely used to measure personal UV exposure since 1976. Despite the development of electronic UV dosimeters, chemical dosimeters maintain their suitability in human exposure research as versatile, labour- and cost-effective UV monitors that require no power. The main limitation of existing chemical dosimeters is their short dynamic measurement range, as they are saturated after relatively short exposure times. Consequently, prolonged personal UV exposures are estimated either from measurements spanning just a few days, with high uncertainty, or by the regular replacement of dosimeters on location, a practice that increases the cost and effort. A dosimeter that continuously measures longer periods would facilitate the task and provide more reliable estimates of prolonged UV exposures.

A new chemical UV dosimeter that meets this demand was developed and fully characterised in this study. The dosimeter, composed of unstabilised solvent cast polyvinyl chloride (PVC) in 16 μm thin film, is able to measure at least three weeks of full day exposure to solar UV radiation under clear sky conditions in summer at subtropical sites. This is twenty times the dose capacity of the most commonly used chemical UV dosimeter, a polysulphone based UV dosimeter.

The optimal parameters of the dosimeter's construction and its dosimetric properties were experimentally investigated and characterised. The results show that the proposed dosimeter is easy to prepare, inexpensive, physically robust and easily analysed using an FTIR spectrometer. It responds mainly to UVB radiation, and hence can be calibrated for quantifying erythemally effective doses for long-term personal exposure studies. The response of the dosimeter to solar UV radiation is independent of temperature and dose rate. It also, exhibits an acceptable angular-error (defined as the deviation of the dosimeter's relative response from the cosine function when the angle of incident beam is changed) and almost no dark reaction.

A field test was conducted to validate the proposed dosimeter with long-term personal UV exposure measurements. The erythema UV exposures to selected anatomical sites on rotating head form manikins measured with the PVC dosimeter agreed well with the measurements obtained concurrently by a lower dose capacity chemical UV dosimeter, and are on a level with the results reported in earlier similar studies.

The characterised dosimeter is a valuable tool for research on the latent effects of cumulative UV exposure on human health. Measurements over longer periods will provide more reliable annual and lifetime exposure estimates as the larger the sample size (length of measurement period), the more accurately the sample will present the population (annual or lifetime UV exposure).

Certification of Dissertation

The research contained in this dissertation is the full documentation of the research results that are published and presented as

1. Amar, A & Parisi, AV 2012, 'Investigation of unstabilized polyvinyl chloride (PVC) for use as a long-term UV dosimeter: preliminary results', *Measurement Science and Technology*, vol. 23, no. 8, pp. 1-7.
2. Amar, A & Parisi, AV 2013, 'Spectral response of solvent-cast polyvinyl chloride (PVC) thin film used as a long-term UV dosimeter', *Journal of Photochemistry and Photobiology B: Biology*, vol. 125, pp. 115-20.
3. Amar, A & Parisi, AV 2013, 'Optical properties of a long dynamic range chemical UV dosimeter based on solvent cast polyvinyl chloride (PVC)', *Journal of Photochemistry and Photobiology B: Biology*, vol. 128, pp. 92-9.
4. Amar, A and Parisi, AV. (2012) Investigation of unstabilized polyvinyl chloride (PVC) for use as a long-term UV dosimeter: preliminary results. In: 37th Annual Conference of the Australasian Radiation Protection Society (ARPS 2012): Radiation Safety: Bridging the Gap, 14-17 Oct 2012, Sydney, Australia.

I certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analyses, software and conclusions reported in this dissertation are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.

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Contents

Abstract	i
Certification of Dissertation.....	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Contents	v
Table of Figures	ix
List of Tables	xvi
 Chapter 1 Introduction	 1
1.1 Introduction	2
1.2 Objectives	4
1.3 Dissertation Outline	5
 Chapter 2 Literature review	 6
2.1 Ultraviolet radiation (UV).....	7
2.2 UV Quantities and units.....	9
2.3 Solar UV radiation	12
2.3.1 Extra-terrestrial solar UV irradiance	12
2.3.2 Global solar UV irradiance	13
2.3.3 Absorption and scattering of UV radiation	14
2.3.4 Atmospheric absorption	15
2.3.5 Cloud cover	17
2.3.6 Surface albedo	19
2.3.7 Solar zenith angle	19
2.4 Effects of exposure to solar UV radiation on humans	20
2.4.1 Positive effects: vitamin D production.....	20
2.4.2 Detrimental effects of exposure to UV radiation	21
2.5 Measuring personal exposure to UV radiation	24

2.5.1 Physical UV dosimeters (Electronic dosimeters).....	25
2.5.2 Biological UV dosimeters (Biosensors).....	25
2.5.3 Chemical UV dosimeters (UV actinometers).....	26
2.5.4 Determination of UV-induced changes within chemical UV dosimeters	28
2.6 Chemical UV dosimeter requirements	31
2.6.1 Dosimetric properties	31
2.6.2 Practical requirements	35
2.7 Suitability of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) for long-term UV dosimetry.....	36
2.8 Conclusion.....	38
Chapter 3 Materials and Methods	39
3.1 Introduction	40
3.2 Equipment and instrumentation	41
3.2.1 Polymer film casting table.....	41
3.2.2 Film thickness measurements.....	42
3.2.3 Irradiation facilities	44
3.2.4 Irradiance measurements	54
3.2.5 Optical absorbance measurements	57
3.3 Optimal parameters and construction specifications of the PVC based dosimeter.....	59
3.3.1 Mixing ratio.....	59
3.3.2 Film thickness	59
3.3.3 Drying time determination	60
3.4 Dosimetric properties	62
3.4.1 Reproducibility.....	62
3.4.2 Determination of the spectral response	63

3.4.3 Temperature independency	67
3.4.4 Dose-rate independency	67
3.4.5 Angular dependence	72
3.4.6 Backscattering effect	72
3.4.7 Erythemat dose response curves	73
3.4.8 Threshold dose	73
3.4.9 Dark reaction	73
Chapter 4 Results	75
4.1 Optimal parameters and construction specifications of the PVC based UV dosimeter	76
4.1.1 Mixing ratio.....	76
4.1.2 Film thickness	79
4.1.3 Drying time determination	82
4.1.4 Conclusion on the optimal parameters of the proposed dosimeter	83
4.2 Dosimetric properties of the PVC dosimeter	84
4.2.1 Reproducibility.....	84
4.2.2 Determination of the spectral response	85
4.2.3 Temperature independency	91
4.2.4 Dose-rate independency	93
4.2.5 Angular dependence	95
4.2.6 Backscattering effect	96
4.2.7 Erythemat dose response curves	97
4.2.8 Threshold dose	101
4.2.9 Dark reaction	101

Chapter 5 Employment of the PVC dosimeter in anatomical exposure	
measurements	105
5.1 Introduction	106
5.2 Materials and methods	106
5.3 Results and Discussion.....	108
Chapter 6 Discussion of Results	113
Chapter 7 Conclusions	120
7.1 Realization of the research objectives	121
7.2 Further research.....	123
7.3 Final conclusion	124
References	125
Appendix A – Pilot Study	155
A.1 Introduction	155
A.2 Investigation of candidate polymers.....	155
A.3 Results and conclusions.....	157

Table of Figures

Figure 2.1: Electromagnetic radiation spectral categories from gamma-rays through radio wavelengths (ISO 2007).	8
Figure 2.2: Action spectra of selected UV-related effects.	10
Figure 2.3: A comparison between the extra-terrestrial solar spectral irradiance and 5800 °K blackbody emission.....	13
Figure 2.4: The action spectrum of vitamin D production by UV radiation (Bouillon et al. 2006).	21
Figure 2.5: Polysulphone spectral response (CIE 1993) (dashed line) compared to erythral action spectrum (CIE 1998).	27
Figure 2.6: Changes in UV absorption spectrum of 40 µm polysulphone film as a result of the exposure to UV radiation.	29
Figure 2.7: IR absorption spectrum of 40 µm polysulphone film.....	30
Figure 2.8: Polymerization of monomer vinyl chloride (MVC) to polyvinyl chloride (PVC).	36
Figure 3.1: The polymer film casting table	41
Figure 3.2: Dial thickness gauge employed in determining the PVC thin sheets.	42
Figure 3.3: The relative spectral irradiance of the fluorescent lamp as measured at the exposure site.....	44
Figure 3.4: The UV irradiance between 280 nm and 400 nm at the exposure site as a function of the height of the lamp.....	45

Figure 3.5: UV irradiation mini chamber employed in exposing a number of PVC dosimeters to the same UV radiant exposure.	46
Figure 3.6: The irradiance distribution as measured at the exposure site for different distances between the lamp and the exposure site. The x and y axes represent the length and the width of the board, respectively.	47
Figure 3.7: Set up of exposures using the solar simulator.	48
Figure 3.8: Optical configuration of the 19160–1000 solar simulator (Jeong 2007).	49
Figure 3.9: The relative spectral irradiance of the solar simulator as measured at the exposure site.	50
Figure 3.10: The system of the monochromator and the xenon mercury housing lamp.	51
Figure 3.11: The relative spectral distribution of the irradiation monochromator at different UV wavebands.	52
Figure 3.12: Global solar UV irradiance.	53
Figure 3.13: The DMc150 Bentham spectroradiometer.	54
Figure 3.14: Ocean Optics USB4000 Fiber Optic Spectrometer.	55
Figure 3.15: The outdoor UVB Biometer mounted on the roof of a USQ building.	56
Figure 3.16: The FTIR spectrophotometer employed in measuring the IR absorption of the dosimeters.	57
Figure 3.17: UV-Vis Spectrophotometer	58

Figure 3.18: Quantitative dependence of residual tetrahydrofuran in solvent cast PVC samples on drying time at 50 °C (Maláč et al. 1969).....	61
Figure 3.19: Transmittance spectra of the nine cut-off filters.....	64
Figure 3.20: Spectral irradiance as calculated behind each of the four narrow band-pass filters.	65
Figure 3.21: Relative spectral irradiance of the narrow bands supplied by the irradiation monochromator.	66
Figure 3.22: The change of the spectral irradiance measured at the exposure site as a function of the distance between the fluorescent lamp and the dosimeters.	68
Figure 3.23: The percentage decrease of the spectral irradiance from its initial value (when the distance is 6 cm) as a function of the distance between the fluorescent lamp and the dosimeters.....	69
Figure 3.24: Transmission of the PP sheet employed to attenuate the irradiance of the solar UV simulator.....	70
Figure 3.25: Irradiance spectra of the solar UV simulator employed in exposing the PVC dosimeters to 1 MJ/m ² broadband UV.	71
Figure 4.1: The measured thickness of PVC sheets prepared with a fixed height of the casting blade (100 µm) as a function of the employed concentration of PVC/THF solution. The error bars represent the standard error of the measured thickness.....	78
Figure 4.2: The absorbance of PVC thin films at 1064 cm ⁻¹ as a function of film thickness. The error bars are the standard error in the measured thickness and in the IR absorbance of five PVC dosimeters fabricated from each sheet.....	80

Figure 4.3: Dose-response curves of PVC thin films of different thicknesses. The y error bars represent the standard error in the measured absorbance of the three irradiated dosimeters of each thickness while the x error bars represent a variation of 3% in the lamp output.....	81
Figure 4.4: Change of absolute absorbance at 1064 cm^{-1} of PVC dosimeters as a function of drying time at $50\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$. The error bars represent the standard error of the measured absorbance.....	82
Figure 4.5: The normalised absorbance change of PVC dosimeters exposed to 200 kJ/m^2 at $25\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ and $45\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ after being dried for different periods at $50\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$. The error bars represent the standard error of the normalised absorbance change as calculated by the error propagation formulae.	83
Figure 4.6: Dose response curve of ten PVC dosimeters subjected to a total broadband UV radiant exposure of 27 MJ/m^2 of radiation presented along with the average deviation from the mean of the dosimeters' absorbance change as a function of the radiant exposure. The y error bars represent the standard error of the measured absorbance change, they are shorter than the dimensions of the associated symbol and do not appear clearly on the graph, while the x bars represent 3% variation in the output of the lamp.	84
Figure 4.7: The irradiance difference received by the consecutive pairs irradiated behind the filters 1-2, 2-3, and 4-5.....	86
Figure 4.8: Spectral response of the PVC dosimeter as obtained using the cut-off filter technique.	87
Figure 4.9: Spectral response of the PVC dosimeter as obtained using the narrow band-pass filter technique.	88

Figure 4.10: Spectral response of the PVC dosimeter obtained using an irradiation monochromator where the dosimeters were exposed to 0.5 MJ/m^2 at $25 \pm 2 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ (circle), 0.1 MJ/m^2 at $25 \pm 2 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ (square) and 0.1 MJ/m^2 at $40 \pm 2 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ (triangle). The error bars indicate the 5.6 nm FWHM of each exposure waveband.....	89
Figure 4.11: Averaged spectral response of the PVC dosimeter as obtained using the irradiation monochromator with different radiant exposures at different temperatures.....	90
Figure 4.12: The response of PVC dosimeters subjected to 0.2 MJ/m^2 of broad band UV as a function of the exposure temperature.....	91
Figure 4.13: The response of PVC dosimeters subjected to 0.5 MJ/m^2 of broad band UV as a function of the exposure temperature.....	91
Figure 4.14: The response of PVC dosimeters subjected to 1 MJ/m^2 of broad band UV as a function of the exposure temperature.....	92
Figure 4.15: The response of PVC dosimeters exposed to 2 MJ/m^2 of broadband UV exposure as a function of the irradiance supplied by the fluorescent lamp. The error bars are the standard error of the normalised absorbance change as calculated by the error propagation formulae.	93
Figure 4.16: The response of PVC dosimeters exposed to 1 MJ/m^2 of broadband UV exposure as a function of the irradiance supplied by the solar UV simulator. The error bars are the standard error of the normalised absorbance change as calculated by the error propagation formulae.	94
Figure 4.17: The response of PVC dosimeters as a function of the angle of the incident beam (dashed line) compared with the ideal cosine function (thin line). The bar chart shows the deviation of the PVC angular response from the cosine function. The y error bars represent the standard error of the normalised	

response as calculated by error propagation formulae, while the x error bars represent an estimated angular alignment error of $\pm 1^\circ$.95

Figure 4.18: The response of PVC dosimeters irradiated evenly over different backgrounds.96

Figure 4.19: Solar erythematous UV dose response curves of the PVC dosimeter. The summer curve includes the response of the control dosimeters. The x error bars represent the standard error of the measured absorbance while the y error bars represent 10% accuracy of the Biometer99

Figure 4.20: Combined dose response curve of the PVC dosimeter for the four seasons..... 100

Figure 4.21: The response of PVC dosimeter to small doses..... 101

Figure 4.22: The dark reaction induced change of PVC dosimeters exposed to 3.5 MJ/m² of broadband UV and stored after exposure at different temperatures.. 102

Figure 4.23: The dark reaction induced change of PVC dosimeters exposed to 1.75 MJ/m² of broadband UV and stored after exposure at different temperatures. 103

Figure 4.24: The dark reaction induced change of two groups of PVC dosimeters (A, B) subjected to two different exposures and stored 104

Figure 5.1: The experimental set-up for the anatomical exposure measurements showing the PVC and PPO dosimeters attached to chosen spots on manikins that were mounted on a rotating platform. 107

Figure 5.2: The dose response curve of the PVC based dosimeter. The error bars are the standard error in the measured absorbance of the dosimeters..... 108

Figure 5.3: The dose response curve of the PPO based dosimeter. The error bars are the standard error in the measured absorbance of the dosimeters.....	109
Figure 5.4: Doses received by five anatomical sites due to exposure to solar radiation for 12 days as measured by PVC and PPO dosimeters.....	110
Figure 6.1: Spectral response of 16 μm PVC dosimeter (thick line) compared to the erythral action spectrum (CIE 1998) (dotted line), PS spectral response (CIE 1993) (dashed line) and the PPO spectral response (Parisi et al. 2010b) (thin line).	115
Figure A.1: The shape and dimensions of fabricated dosimeters	156
Figure A.2: Changes in 1724 cm^{-1} and 1064 cm^{-1} peaks of IR absorption spectrum of the PVC dosimeter due to 30 hours of exposure to artificial UV radiation..	158
Figure A.3: Changes in the 1064 cm^{-1} peak of IR absorption spectrum of the PVC dosimeter due to exposure to artificial UV radiation.....	158
Figure A.4: The change in 1064 cm^{-1} peak intensity of the PVC dosimeter with the increase of unweighted exposure received from the artificial UV in (MJ/m^2).	159
Figure A.5: Dose response of the PVC dosimeter to solar radiation. The error bars show the standard error of each point.....	160
Figure A.6: The percentage change in 1064 cm^{-1} peak intensity of the PVC dosimeter with the increase of erythral exposure to solar UV.	161

List of Tables

Table 3.1: Deviation of the thickness gauge measurements from the thickness of standard feeler gauge leaves.....	43
Table 4.1: A comparison of the preparation process and physical properties of PVC sheets prepared using different concentrations.	76
Table 4.2: A comparison of the physical properties of PVC sheets prepared from 10% PVC/THF solution using different heights of the casting blade.	79
Table 5.1: The uncertainty in the estimated anatomical exposures measured by PVC dosimeters.	111
Table 5.2: The UV exposure relative to the vertex at five anatomical sites as measured using the PVC dosimeter after 12 consecutive days of exposure in summer at Toowoomba, QLD.....	112
Table 6.1: A comparison of the dosimetric properties of the PVC, PPO and PS dosimeters.	119